Ambassador Berry's Remarks at the
Ambassador's Innovation Roundtable in Adelaide

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Innovation lies at the very heart of what it means to be an American. From the beginning, our country was a grand experiment. We believed then – and now – that freedom plus sweat equals progress. And if you add creativity or innovation, you get progress squared.

One of the United States' greatest presidents, Abraham Lincoln, was fascinated by new technology. As president, he pioneered the use of the telegraph as a kind of early smart phone, and he monitored the unfolding of our Civil War daily through telegrams. He approved the construction of the USS Monitor – the United States' first armored gunboat.

He knew then what many of us know now – innovation, invention, and creativity are indispensable ingredients for success.

Adelaide's very own Haigh's Chocolates knows the value of good ingredients. The grandson of company founder Alfred Haigh visited the United States in the late 1940s. There, he examined production models, shop styles, and marketing. Returning to Australia, John Haigh implemented what he learned in America and revolutionized his family's chocolate business. At 100 years old, the company remains an Australian institution.

Today, investment in science, technology, and research is the most important guarantee we can make for our future. And, innovation is essential for success.

And so the United States is investing in basic research through President Obama's Strategy for American Innovation. We are promoting U.S. exports. We are actively supporting entrepreneurs. And we are making historic investments in – among other things – health and medical research.

Most importantly, we are promoting investment in science, technology, engineering and math – or STEM – education. Improving STEM education will be crucial if we want to maintain our competitive edge in the future.

To help develop next-generation STEM practitioners in the United States, we are building public-private partnerships, developing mentorship programs, and putting 100,000 more STEM teachers into classrooms over the next decade. U.S. companies all over the world are stepping up to give students more hands on experience.

Here in South Australia, Lockheed Martin supports Engineers in the Classroom, a STEM initiative that brings Lockheed Martin engineers to secondary schools in the Adelaide area to increase awareness of careers in engineering and promote the uptake of STEM activities by Australian students.

Our host today, Flinders University, boasts a Science Innovation Learning Centre designed to support first year students pursuing STEM fields. And, Flinders' New Venture Institute – known as NVI – draws the business community and not-for-profit and government sectors into the academic environment, involving students in real-life problem solving. Over the last 18 months, NVI has supported 84 startups, of which 72 are still operating and have created 32 full time jobs.

These are fantastic examples that show us that the United States does not have the monopoly on good ideas or talented people. Across the globe, scientists and engineers are revolutionizing our world. At the same time, we recognize that many of our toughest challenges today recognize no borders.

If we want to solve the world's greatest problems, we must increase our global cooperation.

And, the United States could have no better partner in this effort than Australia.

We want to increase our collaboration with Australian innovators.

Innovators, like Flinders University's own Professor Karen Reynolds, who won the Medical Technology of Australia's Outstanding Achievement Award in 2014, set a high bar for scientific advancement.

Innovators, like Dr. Stephanie Reuter Lange, a Fulbright alumna from the University of South Australia who is working with an American pharmaceutical company to research and develop drug treatment for rare diseases, highlight the groundbreaking binational research produced by six decades of American and Australian Fulbright scholars.

Innovators, like the Australian and American researchers and scientists who work together as part of the Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative – supported by the U.S. National Institutes of Health and Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council – are the future of advances in neuroscience.

In July the U.S. embassy brought many of these leading researchers to the University of Canberra for a conference designed to highlight and promote U.S.-Australian collaboration in areas of biomedical research.

South Australia's innovative institutions have capitalized on such partnerships to cultivate an innovation ecosystem, particularly in the field of health and medical research.

Institutions, such as the South Australian Health and Research Institute or SAHMRI in Adelaide, where American and Australian researchers undertake pioneering work in areas from neuroscience to cancer research.

Institutions, such as Health Industry South Australia, which partners with universities across the state to promote pharmaceutical and medical device development and capitalize on the southern hemisphere's largest health and biomedical precinct.

Institutions, such as Adelaide Research and Innovation or ARI at the University of Adelaide, which has been tapping in to the power of private-public partnerships for over 30 years. ARI has a proven track record on healthcare – it boasts impressive results in cancer research, heart disease, infertility, epidemiology, and health education.

But, healthcare is only part of the story, our partnerships span a wide range of fields, from conservation and renewable energy to engineering and food science.

And, we can do more with you – sharing ideas, technology, and research – to make both of our countries stronger and more productive.

South Australia knows the value of cooperation and is leveraging its relationships as part of an historic shift of its economy from traditional manufacturing to a knowledge economy.

Perhaps no place symbolizes this transition more than Tonsley, where we are today. Here a new industrial future is rising from the ashes of an old car plant.

And, U.S. companies and institutions are part of this incredible story of transformation. Based in Mount Gambier, Kimberly-Clark's Millicent Mill produces 85,000 tons of tissue paper each year for the New Zealand and Australia markets. Recent innovations, including a co-generation plant, improvement of wastewater quality, and introduction of automated guided vehicles, have improved efficiency and helped it compete globally.

Hewlett Packard has partnered with the University of South Australia to launch an IT course of study and to build an innovation center in Adelaide. Microsoft launched its Innovation Centre South Australia – MICSA – earlier this year. MICSA is designed to help drive the next generation of startups and entrepreneurs, as well as accelerate the growth of small- to medium-sized enterprises.

Our cooperation in research and development spans universities and government, think tanks and corporations. These partnerships help our economies expand, develop, and compete in the world market. Creative people and creative institutions are teaming up to figure out how to deal with a changing world, changing markets, and a changing climate.

But one of the concerns I have heard voiced over and over across Australia is about the difficulty of getting ideas funded so that projects could make the leap from the drawing board to the market.

That is, in part, why we began this series of conversations: We need to put students, business leaders, academics, scientists, researchers, government officials, venture capitalists, and entrepreneurs in the same room so that we can discuss best practices and ideas for expanding cooperation – and then put those ideas into action.

Innovation is what can bring the stuff of science fiction to life.

In November, Adelaide's southern suburbs will play host to a scene out of a movie as multiple driverless cars zoom and race, and swerve and brake, on and off the Southern Expressway.

Carnegie Mellon University, together with Flinders University, Volvo, and other corporate and research partners, will be conducting the first on-road trials of driverless cars in the Southern Hemisphere.

The independent Australian Road Research Board predicts that the international driverless car industry will be worth $90 billion within just 15 years. South Australia is poised to become a key player in the driverless vehicle industry.

Whether we are turning science fiction in to science reality, or improving people's health with medical advances, it is important to remember our greatest responsibility. If we want to give our children a better world, we absolutely must pursue and apply the research that will make it happen.

I can't wait to see what discoveries we might unlock today and thank you all for joining us. With that – let's get to work!